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SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

BY
STUART WALKER



STEWART KIDD

MODERN PLAYS

EDITED BY

FRANK SHAY

Stewart Kidd Play Series

The Portmanteau Plays

By STUART WALKER

Edited and with an introduction by Edward Hale Bierstadt

Brooklyn Eagle: "All of the plays in these attractive maroon volumes are literary without being pedantic, and dramatic without being noisy. They are a genuine addition to the steadily growing list of worthwhile plays by American dramatists. Stewart Kidd are to be congratulated on presenting them to the public in such attractive format."

Vol. 1—Portmanteau Plays

Introduction
The Triplet
Nevertheless
Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil
Medicine Show

Vol. 2—More Portmanteau Plays

Introduction
The Lady of the Weeping Willow Tree
The Very Naked Boy
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Vol. 3—Portmanteau Adaptations

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Gammer Gurton's Needle
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Each of the above volumes handsomely bound and illustrated. Per volume net, in Silk Cloth, \$2.50; ¾ Turkey Morocco, \$8.50.

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Author of Portmanteau Plays and More Portmanteau Plays
and Portmanteau Adaptations



CINCINNATI
STEWART KIDD COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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MAR 17 1922

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MURAT THEATRE, INDIANAPOLIS, JUNE 24,

1921

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

A Play in One Act

(A Sequel to SIX WHO PASS WHILE THE LENTILS BOIL)

PROLOGUE TO THE PERFORMANCE . . . Tom Powers
THE PROLOGUE Edwin Noel
THE DEVICE-BEARER James Morgan
YOU-IN-THE-AUDIENCE You and Others

THE POPULATION Aldrich Bowker
THE SOLDIERY John Wray
THE MIME Oscar Davisson
THE MILKMAID Helen Burch
THE BLINDMAN Walter Vonnegut
THE BALLAD-SINGER Stuart Walker
THE KING'S TRUMPETER Oakley Richey
HIS MAJESTY, THE KING George Somnes
THE KING'S COUNCILLOR Robert McGroarty
THE KING'S GREAT-AUNT Elizabeth Patterson
THE HEADSMAN McKay Morris
HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN Judith Lowry
SIR DAVID LITTLE-BOY Robert Masters
HIS MOTHER Blanche Yurka

Scenery designed by Stuart Walker and Oakley Richey. Costumes by Frank J. Zimmerer and Wilmot Heitland. Properties by Frank J. Zimmerer.

LULLABY FROM SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

Music by Ethel Franklin Ellis

Sleep, ba - by, sleep, Close your ti - red eyes; Here's a kiss from fa - ther to make you

wealth-y, Here's a kiss from moth - er to make you health - y, And God the Fa - ther

blows a kiss to make you wise. Sleep, ba - by, sleep, Close your ti - red eyes.

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

(A SEQUEL TO SIX WHO PASS WHILE THE
LENTILS BOIL)

AN OUTLINE OF SIX WHO PASS WHILE THE
LENTILS BOIL

While the Boy watches boiling lentils for his Mother, six people pass: The condemned Queen, whom he promises to hide until after the hour set for her decapitation; the Mime, who tempts him to leave his duty; the Milkmaid, who tells him of the reward offered for the Queen and makes him wish he had not made a promise; the Blindman, who shows him why it is best to keep a promise; the Ballad-Singer, who would rather wander all his life than break a promise; and the dreadful Headsman who, outwitted by the Boy, finds the Queen too late. Her Majesty gratefully knights Sir David Little-Boy and takes him in state to the King's castle. He is free to go, because by this time the lentils have boiled. He has done his duty and he has kept his promise.

CHARACTERS

THE PROLOGUE

THE DEVICE-BEARER

YOU-IN-THE-AUDIENCE

THE POPULATION

THE SOLDIERY

THE MIME

THE MILKMAID

THE BLINDMAN

THE BALLAD-SINGER

THE KING'S TRUMPETER

HIS MAJESTY, THE KING

THE KING'S COUNCILLOR

HER HIGHNESS, THE KING'S GREAT-
AUNT

THE HEADSMAN

HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN

SIR DAVID LITTLE-BOY

HIS MOTHER

*The scene is a gateway to the King's Castle.
The time is when you will.*

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

(The Prologue and the Device-Bearer enter.)

PROLOGUE

I am the Prologue. He is the Device-Bearer. I am here to tell you about the play that hides behind these curtains. He serves the simple purpose of balancing me as a decoration.

(The Prologue claps his hands and the Device-Bearer sits at the side of the stage and henceforth is nothing more than a small part of the picture.)

It is possible that something difficult may creep into this simple play. If there is anything you do not understand I shall be glad to explain it to you.

YOU *(in audience)*

While the play is going on?

PROLOGUE

Of course.

YOU

That will be disturbing.

PROLOGUE

Why? If one *must* talk in the theater everybody ought to be allowed to hear.

Now the interesting thing about this play is that it isn't true at all. It is all make-believe. Nobody in it *ever was*, and, unless you do your part, no one in it ever will be.

YOU

What can we do?

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

PROLOGUE

Believe.

YOU

I can't believe what isn't real.

PROLOGUE

Then make it real. . . . Here are the curtains. They divide you and them. . . . You are real, perhaps, and they are make-believe, surely. When these curtains open will you come here, shall they go there, or will you, both you and they, forget everything except the play?

So, remove your hats, dear ladies, fix your hair once and for all. Clear your throats, you husky men, and cough now, for the play begins. Amongst you there are some so young, so eternally young, that they will soon be lost in the story. Do not disturb them if you have forgotten how to play. So, remove your hats, dear ladies, fix your hair for good and all. Clear your throats, you husky men, and cough now. See, the play begins.

(He claps his hands and the curtains open, disclosing the scene.)

This play is the story of what happens when one is guilty of a breach of etiquette.

YOU

What is etiquette?

PROLOGUE

Etiquette? Why, etiquette is living according to rules made by people who have never smiled.

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

. . . We are now outside the King's Palace.
. . . This is a gate. Through this the King
and the King's Great-Aunt will come. The
King will sit here, and the King's Great-Aunt
will sit here. . . . This is the Headsman's
block, and here the lovely Queen is to be be-
headed before the clocks strike twelve at mid-
day, a half an hour from now.

YOU

Where is it?

PROLOGUE

Who can tell what country? I wish I knew.

. . . Are you ready? . . . Quiet, then.

. . . Here comes the Population; and here
the Soldiery.

*(The Prologue sits at the side of the curtains oppo-
site the Device-Bearer.)*

*(The Population enters from one side of the
stage, the Soldiery from the other; the former
carries a bit of bread; the latter a lance and a
silken cord.)*

POPULATION

Good-morning, Soldiery.

SOLDIERY

Good-morning, Population.

POPULATION

I've come to see the beheading.

SOLDIERY

You're early.

POPULATION

I brought my lunch. I want to see it all.

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

SOLDIERY

That's good. Now help me stretch the ropes to keep the Population back.

POPULATION

Why stretch the ropes to keep the Population back?

SOLDIERY

It is the law.

POPULATION

I'm the Population, and I promise that I'll stay back.

SOLDIERY

The Soldiery has *always* stretched the ropes to hold the Population back. I shan't stop it now, whether you number one or thousands. Here, take this end and stretch the rope.

(He sets his lance against the block, and he and the Population stretch the rope, laying it very carefully on the ground in a half-circle.)

SOLDIERY *(taking up his lance and assuming a professional pose, bellows)*

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

POPULATION *(obsequiously, kneeling)*

Yes, sir.

SOLDIERY *(setting down his lance and assuming a human tone)*

Thank you for your help.

POPULATION

That's all right.

(He offers the Soldiery a crust of bread, which is gratefully accepted.)

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

(Indeed, the Soldier is a very excellent and human person, and his fierce attitude with the lance and his bellowing are merely official, like a uniform, and as easily removed. But the Soldier has associated bellowing with taking up his lance so long that he is wholly automatic now, as he should be.)

POPULATION

Who are they beheading?

SOLDIERY

What did you say?

POPULATION

I said, "Who are they beheading?"

SOLDIERY

Whom?

POPULATION

Yes, who?

SOLDIERY

You mustn't say "Who are they beheading?"

You must say "Whom are they beheading?"

POPULATION

Nonsense. You don't say "Whom are you," do you?

SOLDIERY

Certainly not, but you ought to say "Whom are they beheading?"

POPULATION

Well, you can—

SOLDIERY *(taking up his lance, bellows)*

You say "Whom are they beheading!"

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

POPULATION

All right, if you are going to resort to force:
Whom are they beheading?

SOLDIERY (*putting his lance down*)

I don't know. That's the Headsman's business.

POPULATION

I heard it was the Queen.

SOLDIERY

Maybe. I wish it was the King's Great-Aunt.
(*The Mime and the Milkmaid enter.*)

POPULATION

Is the King's Great-Aunt very old?

SOLDIERY

She's very old and very meddlesome. She's
into everything, and she knows every law that's
ever passed, and she holds us to them.
(*The Mime steps forward.*)

MIME

Is this—

SOLDIERY (*seeing him and the Milkmaid for the first time, leaps for his lance and, assuming his professional pose, bellows*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of
death! Do you hear?

(*There is no answer.*)

(*Bellows again*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of
death! Do you hear?

(*There is no answer. The Soldiery looks appealingly at the Population*)

Do you hear?

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

(Again no answer, and again an appeal to the Population)

Do you hear?

POPULATION *(to the Milkmaid)*

Say "Yes, sir."

MIME AND MILKMAID

Yes, sir.

SOLDIERY *(putting down his lance)*

Why didn't you answer me the first time?

MILKMAID

I didn't know you wanted me to.

SOLDIERY

Well, I did.

MILKMAID

But you shouted so loud I thought you weren't talking to anybody in particular.

SOLDIERY

It's the law.

MIME *(to the Population)*

Some laws are funny, don't you think?

POPULATION

I don't know. A law's a law, and I'm the Population, and a law is for the Population.

MIME

And now we know!

SOLDIERY

Who are you?

MIME

I'm a mime.

POPULATION

What's a mime?

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

MIME

A mime's a mime.

SOLDIERY

What's a mime?

MIME

A mime's a mountebank.

MILKMAID

And what's a mountebank?

MIME

A mountebank's a strolling player.

SOLDIERY

Are you going to perform for us?

MIME

After the decapitation.

POPULATION

What's your name?

MIME (*in action*)

Ho, for Jack the Juggler! Would you miss him?

SOLDIERY

We know all the rest of that.

MILKMAID

You must let him finish.

SOLDIERY

What's the use?

POPULATION

Let's have it, Jack.

MIME

How can I when you do not let me make my speech?

MILKMAID

Go on, we'll let you finish.

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

MIME

Oh, no. I'll wait until the crowd is here.

POPULATION

I'm the crowd.

MILKMAID

Come on! Come on!

MIME

All right. . . . Ho, for Jack the Juggler!
Would you miss him—

(A cry is heard, "Help the blind! Help the blind!" and on top of it just the refrain "Old King Cole was a merry old soul.")

(The Soldiery is on his guard immediately with his lance as the Blindman and the Ballad-Singer enter.)

SOLDIERY *(bellowing)*

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death! Do you hear?

MILKMAID

You'd better say, "Yes, sir," or he'll yell it again.

SOLDIERY *(begins to bellow again)*

You can't—

BALLAD-SINGER AND BLINDMAN

Yes, sir.

SOLDIERY *(normally)*

I've got to finish it—*(and again starts)* come inside—

MIME

We know the rest of it.

SOLDIERY

Don't interfere with the law. *(Continues bellow-*

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

ing) The ropes on pain of death! Do you hear?

ALL (*eagerly*)

Yes, sir!

SOLDIERY (*putting down his lance*)

Thank you. . . . What are you doing here?

MILKMAID

I came to see the beheading.

BLINDMAN

And I, that I might tell about it.

SINGER

And I, that I might sing to the crowd.

MIME

And I, that I might dazzle you.

POPULATION

Everybody's here—except the Queen. Why not begin?

MILKMAID

They can't find the Queen.

POPULATION

Where is she?

MILKMAID

They've offered a reward for her—

POPULATION

A reward?

MIME

How much?

MILKMAID

A pail of gold and a pair of finger-rings.

POPULATION

Why don't you find her, Soldiery?

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

SOLDIERY

No one told me to.

BLINDMAN

You say the reward is a pail of gold and a pair of finger-rings?

SINGER

That's what she said. I know—

SOLDIERY (*taking up his lance*)

What do you know?

BLINDMAN

Nothing.

SINGER

Nothing.

SOLDIERY

But you said "*I know.*" Is it about the Queen?
What do you know about the Queen?

SINGER

Shall I sing you a ballad?

POPULATION

Yes, sing a ballad.

SOLDIERY

What do you know about the Queen?

MILKMAID

Oh, let him sing a ballad.

SOLDIERY

I must do my duty. What do you know about the Queen?

(*The King's Trumpeter enters and stands at the center of the gate. He blows a noble blast on his trumpet.*)

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

TRUMPETER

His Majesty, the King!

(All kneel except the Trumpeter as the King enters, followed by his Councillor.)

(The Trumpeter blows a lesser blast.)

Her Highness, the King's Great-Aunt.

(The King's Great-Aunt enters.)

(She and the King seat themselves ceremoniously.)

(The Councillor bows between the King and the King's Great-Aunt.)

(A mechanical chant is the official way of conducting cases here, and a man must learn by rote what he must say at trials, be he King or Councillor.)

COUNCILLOR *(in a stiff, mechanical chant)*

Your Majesty, it is our duty to inform you that your wife, the Queen, is to be beheaded, in compliance with the law, while your Majesty's four clocks are striking twelve.

KING *(chanting)*

Who is the aggrieved person?

COUNCILLOR *(chanting)*

The aggrieved sits on your left.

MILKMAID *(whispering)*

Doesn't the King know his wife is to be beheaded?

POPULATION *(whispering)*

Of course he does.

MILKMAID

Then why do they tell him here?

POPULATION

It is the law.

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

SOLDIERY (*bellowing, after he is quite sure he has heard the entire conversation*)

Silence!

KING (*chanting*)

Then let the aggrieved speak.

COUNCILLOR (*chanting*)

His Majesty the King bids you speak your grievance which is just cause for the Queen's beheading.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT (*chanting*)

Last night we were celebrating the second year of peace with the neighboring kingdom. We were dancing the minuet after the banquet—

MILKMAID (*whispering*)

Does the old lady dance?

POPULATION (*whispering*)

She tries to.

SOLDIERY (*bellowing*)

Silence!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

When the Queen—(*forgetting to chant*) your wife—

(*The Councillor coughs and she chants again*)

stepped on the ring-toe of the King's Great-Aunt.

KING (*chanting*)

What is your demand?

KING'S GREAT-AUNT (*chanting*)

I demand that the aforesaid Queen be beheaded.

KING

By what authority?

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

According to the law.

KING

Is there such a law?

COUNCILLOR

There is.

KING

Read the law.

COUNCILLOR (*unrolling a parchment, reads*)

Whereas, if a Queen step on the ring-toe of the King's Great-Aunt, or any member of her family; Be it resolved, the aforesaid Queen must be beheaded while the King's four clocks are striking twelve at mid-day.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I demand the execution of the law.

KING

We, the King, decree that our wife the Queen be beheaded to-day while our four clocks are striking twelve at mid-day.

COUNCILLOR

The culprit will kneel.

MILKMAID (*whispering*)

Where is the culprit?

SOLDIERY (*bellowing*)

Silence!

(*Naturally*) She isn't here.

KING (*rising*)

It is not in our power to pardon you, oh, guilty Queen. Gracefulness is a royal possession, and when a Queen is no longer graceful she can no longer live.

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

KING'S GREAT-AUNT (*naturally*)

The Queen isn't here.

KING

The law will take its course.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Where is the Queen?

COUNCILLOR

I've offered a pail of gold and a pair of finger-rings for her apprehension.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Two pails of gold if she is found!

BLINDMAN

Is that a promise, your Highness?

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

Silence!

(*Normally*) Royalty can't take back any statements.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I mean—

KING

We heard what you *said*. We shall judge what you *meant*.

COUNCILLOR

It is on the stroke of twelve, your Majesty, and there is no Queen, no culprit.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Are the laws of our country to be held up to ridicule? Find the Queen! Four pails of gold if she be found!

(*The kneeling commoners are excited.*)

Six pails of gold and six pairs of finger-rings!

(*The King's clocks begin to strike, but not in*

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

unison. First there is one large one, then two smaller ones, and finally a tiny one.)

(During the striking of the clocks there is great excitement. The spectators almost forget their manners before royalty. The Councillor buzzes around. The King's Great-Aunt cries out again and again, "Where is the Queen?" "Where is the culprit?" The Soldiery, lance in hand, bellows his familiar call, "You can't come inside the ropes." The Trumpeter blows his trumpet. The King stands up and counts the strokes of the clocks.)

KING *(at the twelfth stroke of the tiny clock)*

The Queen is free! I now decree a holiday to all the land. And everybody can go to hunt the Queen.

SINGER

And if I find the Queen I shall get six pails of gold and six pairs of finger-rings?

MILKMAID

That was the promise of the King's Great-Aunt.

SOLDIERY

Silence!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I said—

KING

You said just that. The King's Great-Aunt will give six pails of gold and six pairs of finger-rings to the one who finds the Queen.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I refuse—

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

KING

Royalty cannot refuse to fulfill a promise!
And to the offer of my aunt I shall add six
more pails of gold.

BLINDMAN

Can they behead the Queen now if they find
her?

KING

They can not.

BLINDMAN

Then I can find her, your Majesty.

KING

Where is she? Come here and tell me.
*(As the Blindman steps forward, the Soldierly
bellows "You can't come inside the ropes.")*

KING

Come here!

COUNCILLOR

He cannot approach your Majesty. . . . It
is the *law*.

SINGER

I can find the Queen, your Majesty!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Off with their worthless heads! They have
aided the escape of the culprit!

KING

No, I decree—

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

The law! The law!

COUNCILLOR

Her Highness is right, your Majesty. The law

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

states that anyone guilty of aiding a culprit to escape must be beheaded.

SINGER

We did not *aid*.

BLINDMAN

No, we did not.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

The word of a commoner cannot stand.

COUNCILLOR

Soldiery, do your duty!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Now, we shall have a beheading after all!

SOLDIERY (*to Singer and Blindman*)

Come on, step up!

MILKMAID

Mercy, have mercy!

SOLDIERY

Step up.

(*The Ballad-Singer and the Blindman walk to the side of the block and there the Soldiery binds them together, all the while they protest their innocence.*)

(*At this moment the Headsman is heard, "Her Majesty the Queen and Sir David Little-Boy. Her Majesty the Queen and Sir David Little-Boy."*)

(*The Headsman, bearing his ax, enters in his own stately way, and with the utmost dignity starts to approach the King, but as he nears the rope, the Soldiery bellows his command, "You can't come inside the ropes." The Headsman stops short, but slays the Soldiery with a glance.*)

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

HEADSMAN

The King's Headsman, the Winder of the King's
Four Clocks—

SOLDIERY

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of
death. Do you hear?

HEADSMAN

Yes, I hear. (*Then he calls with refined dignity*)
Her Majesty the Queen and Sir David Little-
Boy!

(*The Queen and the Boy enter. The boy suddenly
becomes very conscious of being in the presence of
the King.*)

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Oh, there you are!

KING

My Queen!

COUNCILLOR

It is not etiquette, your Majesty.

KING (*recalling the proper procedure, chants*)

Who is this before us?

QUEEN (*chanting*)

It is your wife, the Queen.

KING

And who stands beside our Queen?

BOY

I'm—

SOLDIERY

Silence!

QUEEN

This is Sir David Little-Boy.

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

COUNCILLOR

There is no Sir David Little-Boy in the royal almanac, your Majesty.

KING

Who is this Sir David Little-Boy, Sir Headsman?

HEADSMAN

He helped the Queen to escape.

BLINDMAN

Is that the little boy who gave me the lentils when I was hungry, and who would not break a promise?

SINGER

It's the little boy to whom I sang two ballads.

BOY

Queen, why are my two friends bound together?

QUEEN

Sir David, first we must tell them who you are.

BOY (*stepping forward*)

I—

HEADSMAN

Address the King.

BOY

King—

HEADSMAN

That's not the way.

BOY

What do I do?

HEADSMAN

Watch me. (*He struts forward and kneels.*)

Your Majesty—see, that way.

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

BOY (*imitating the Headsman as only a little boy can imitate his elders*)

Your Majesty, I am the little boy who lives in the yellow cottage on the short-cut to the headsman's block.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

How does it happen that you are called Sir David, upstart?

BOY

I'm not an upstart. The Queen called me Sir David Little-Boy.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

What right has the Queen to create a knight? Well?

QUEEN

By the law passed by my great-great-grandfather.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

There is no such law.

QUEEN

Oh, yes, there is, Aunt.

COUNCILLOR

I think your Majesty's memory fails.

QUEEN

It does not fail.

BOY

Queen, I won't be Sir David if it will cause you trouble.

QUEEN

A Queen has one trouble or another, but this will be my last.

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Will you permit this insolence, your Majesty?

KING

Her Majesty the Queen claims a law. Can she produce the law?

QUEEN

I can, your Majesty.

KING

Where is it?

QUEEN

Here (*she takes a scroll from her dress*). I found it in the room of the King's Great-Aunt.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

By what right does a Queen steal into my apartment? Seize her!

(*The Soldiery starts to take the Queen.*)

KING

Hands off the Queen!

(*The Queen takes a step to cross the ropes.*)

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

QUEEN

But I'm the Queen.

SOLDIERY (*normally*)

Duty is duty, your Majesty, law is law. (*Bel-
lowing*) You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

QUEEN

Yes, I hear.

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

KING

Sir Headsman, bring me the law.
(*The Headsman is about to obey.*)

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

KING

Then I shall go to the Queen.

COUNCILLOR

Your Majesty, it is not fitting.

BLINDMAN

I am about to die, oh, Queen; let me give the law.

QUEEN

About to die?

BOY

He is my friend! . . . If the ropes weren't there could I take the law to the King?

QUEEN

Surely.

BOY

Let's take the ropes away.

QUEEN

Alas, it can't be done.

BOY

Let's coil the ropes.

QUEEN

How?

BOY

So. (*He quickly coils the ropes.*)

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

BOY

You can't get inside the ropes! There isn't any inside.

QUEEN (*going to the king*)

Here is the law, your Majesty.

KING (*about to embrace her*)

My Queen!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I protest.

COUNCILLOR

It is not seemly, your Majesty. . . . I'll take the law.

KING

Read the law.

COUNCILLOR

It may be better to discuss it first.

KING

Read the law!

COUNCILLOR (*reading*)

Whereas, all relatives have had an upper hand in my kingdom for three generations and have passed laws that make it difficult for our Queens; Be it resolved, that all such laws shall stand, because etiquette and discipline are good for all mankind, *but* should there ever be a Queen who can escape the punishments devised by relatives she shall be absolute, and thereafter her word will be the law, for any woman

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

who can outwit her husband's relatives is worthy to rule a nation.

QUEEN

I have escaped. I claim the reward of the law.

KING

Your word is absolute. Henceforth you are the law.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT (*feathering her nest*)

Dearest, mount the throne.

QUEEN

Nay, I shall mount the Headman's block.
(*She mounts the Headman's block, and she is very beautiful.*)

I, the Queen—

COUNCILLOR

Your Majesty, it is proper to say "We, the Queen"—

QUEEN

I, the Queen, do first hereby reiterate that this brave knight is Sir David Little-Boy. Second, that—

COUNCILLOR

You should chant it, your Majesty.

QUEEN (*still in normal tones*)

Second, that the office of King's Councillor be vacant; third, that the King's Great-Aunt give up her ring or her ring-toe—

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Mercy! I am too old to lose my ring! I should die without my ring-toe!

QUEEN

Very well, you shall keep your ring and your toe; but when we dance the minuet you must

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

sit on your foot, for in future I shall step when and where I please. . . . Sit on your foot! (*The King's Great-Aunt sits on her foot and wails.*)

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

What is the country coming to! (*But she is very glad to save her toe.*)

YOU (*in the audience*)

Pshaw! this play is just like every other one.

PROLOGUE

It isn't over yet. You just wait.

QUEEN

Fourth, the Soldiery must lay down his arms.

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

You can't come—

QUEEN

Lay down your arms!

SOLDIERY

Pardon me, your Majesty, it was habit. (*He lays down his lance.*)

QUEEN

Loose the bonds from the Blindman and the Ballad-Singer.

(*The Soldiery does so.*)

Sir David, your hand.

(*The Boy, in a glow of wonder, steps forward.*)

Here are your friends.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

A noble cannot have friends among the commoners!

QUEEN

Quite true. Quite true. . . . Mime, step

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

forward. . . . Kneel. . . . Arise, Sir Mime. Every Friday afternoon you shall have an hour's sport with Sir David Little-Boy.

MIME

Please, your Majesty, I must wander far away in search of farthings from the crowds of all the world.

QUEEN

You make men happy with your play. We give you farthings. You will not want.

(As she speaks to each of the others, she makes the gesture of knighting him.)

(They kneel together.)

QUEEN

To you, sweet Lady Milkmaid, I give a spotted cow; to you, Sir Blindman, a cushion and a canopy at the castle gate; to you, Sir Ballad-Singer, a vermilion cloak. Arise. And now, Sir Little-Boy—*(She leans over him)* to you who saved my life, to you who kept your promise, for your mother I give a velvet gown, a silken kerchief, and a cloth-of-gold bonnet, and for yourself I give a milk-white palfrey, two pails of gold, two finger-rings, a castle, and a sword. Sir Councillor—

(The Councillor comes forward and she whispers in his ear.)

COUNCILLOR

The little one, your Majesty?

QUEEN

The best one, Sir Councillor!

(The Councillor goes into the Castle.)

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

QUEEN

Court is dismissed! Your Highness, my husband's Great-Aunt, you may go to your room. You have caused us years of anguish; but I forgive you. Trumpeter, lead her Highness away in state.

(The Trumpeter blows a little blast and exits, shouting "Make way for her Highness, the King's Great-Aunt!")

(The King's Great-Aunt rises with difficulty and waddles away in defeat.)

KING'S GREAT-AUNT (*mumbling*)

I never thought I'd live to see the day—but times have changed. (*Exits into the Castle.*)

QUEEN

The Population may go into the gardens. The Soldiery may take a holiday.

(The Population and the Soldiery go out arm in arm.)

Sir Headsman, you may take your ax to the museum.

BOY

Queen, can he come back and tell me stories?

QUEEN

Whenever you may wish. . . .

(The Headsman starts to go)

BOY

Sir Headsman—

HEADSMAN (*magnificent to the end*)

Sir Headsman—

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

BOY

Sir *Headsman*—

HEADSMAN

Alas, Sir Headsman, no more. I am now only the Winder of the King's Four Clocks.

BOY

Sir Winder of the King's Four Clocks, I—

HEADSMAN (*with the ghost of a smile*)

Sir Winder of the King's Four Clocks! That is the longest title in the kingdom. There is some consolation in that. . . . Well?

BOY (*looking at the Queen's neck*)

You said your ax was so sharp it would cut a hair in two.

HEADSMAN

I did and it will.

BOY

How could it?

HEADSMAN

Easily. This way. (*He swings it downward with all the grace of achieving his swan's song with it.*) See?

BOY

How do you spell hair?

HEADSMAN

H-A-R-E, of course. How else?

BOY

Why, H-A-I-R.

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

HEADSMAN

I never quibble.

(He bows to the Queen, the crowd, and You superbly; and he departs.)

PROLOGUE

He is going to the Museum where other relics are; but civilization will always respect him and remember his ax and keep it sharp.

(The Queen takes her place where the King's Great-Aunt had sat.)

QUEEN

And now my friends and friends of Sir David, you may say good-bye. In an hour we shall meet in the banqueting hall for pies and cherry tarts and cakes and things.

(The Mime steps forward.)

MIME

Sir David Little-Boy, I am your slave.

(He bows very deeply and lays his hand in the Boy's. When he has gone Sir David finds that he is clasping a golden ball.)

(The Milkmaid comes to Sir David.)

MILKMAID

Isn't it wonderful!

(And before he knows it she has thrown her arms around his neck and kissed him and passed on.)

(He doesn't know whether to smile or blush, but he does hang his head.)

(The Blindman shuffles up to him.)

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

BLINDMAN

You only have to close your eyes to make things true. (*And passes on.*)
(*The Ballad-Singer comes.*)

SINGER

Hello!

BOY

Sing me a ballad.

SINGER

Later—perhaps.

BOY

No, now.

QUEEN

Just for us.
(*The Boy sits between her and the King on the step at their feet. The Ballad-Singer sits close beside him.*)

SINGER

This is the Ballad of the Silver Star and the Crescent Moon.
(*Sings to the wondering Boy.*)

Oh, a silver star and a crescent moon
Afloat in the sunset sky
Can make a smile on a scowling face,
Tho' the face be you or I.

For the silver star and the crescent moon
Are like memories afar—
We always dream at the guarded gate
And pass the gate ajar.

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

There's a moral to my little song,
For hearts bowed down and hearts in tune—
The silver star is a distant dream
And a waxing hope is the crescent moon.

Good-bye. And don't forget that the King's
Great-Aunt owes you six pails of gold. Good-
bye.

(He dashes off.)

*(The Boy sits in wonder a moment and then
looks first at the smiling Queen, then at the pleasant
King. He takes the knife from his pouch and
shows it to the King.)*

BOY

Have you seen my knife?

*(The King slips down beside him, which makes
the Boy gasp. It isn't everybody who sits beside
a King.)*

KING

We had a little boy like you, and he loved his
knife. . . . He was a Prince. . . . How
would you like to be a Prince?

BOY

I think—I'd like it.

(He is almost breathless, talking to a King!)

*(The Councillor enters and hands something to
the Queen.)*

KING

And would you like to be my son?

BOY

Yes, sir.

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

QUEEN

And mine?

(As she sits beside him. Now they are not like King and Queen and a little Knight. They are just three people sitting together.)

BOY *(to the lovely Queen)*

Next to my mother I like you.

KING

If you were our little boy, some day you would be a King.

BOY

Oh—I couldn't be a King.

QUEEN

Why not?

BOY

I wouldn't know what to do.

KING

There are many kings who do not know what to do.

QUEEN

And think of all the happiness you could make.

BOY

Could I do whatever I wanted to do?

KING

If you were wise.

BOY

Could I give a ring to the Blindman?

KING

Oh, yes.

BOY

And ask him in?

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

QUEEN

Surely.

BOY

Then—would I have to have a Great-Aunt?

KING

Not now.

BOY

Or a Councillor?

QUEEN

All that is abolished now.

BOY

Then—you're sure I wouldn't have a Great-Aunt?

QUEEN

Quite sure.

BOY

Then—I'd like to be a king!

QUEEN

All right. Shut your eyes.

BOY

Oh, I know—the Blindman told me to shut my eyes to make things come true.

(He shuts his eyes very tight. The Queen unwraps the something which the Councillor brought. It is a beautiful crown. She places it on the boy's head.)

QUEEN

Open your eyes!

(He opens his eyes and his hands steal up to the crown. He can't believe his touch.)

BOY

Oh!

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

QUEEN

How do you feel?

BOY (*gasping*)

All right.

KING

You are a Prince now.

(He takes a cape from his shoulder and throws it about the Boy's shoulders.)

Arise, my Son and Prince.

(The Boy stands up, and he looks every inch a little king in his crown and robe.)

BOY

Am I a real prince?

QUEEN

As real as the King or I.

(The Boy walks a princely step or two, when a voice is heard calling "David! David!" It is the sweetest voice in the world, and it is sad and troubled now. The Boy stops short.)

BOY

My mother!

VOICE

David!

BOY

I am here, Mother.

(The mother enters. She is the most beautiful woman in the world—like your mother and mine, but her eyes are wide with fear.)

MOTHER

David! Oh, I thought I had lost you! My boy! my boy!

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

BOY

Mother, I am a Prince.

MOTHER

Oh, my little dream-boy, you are always my Prince. Why did you run away?

BOY

I didn't run away. I came to save the Queen. And now I am a Prince.

MOTHER

The Queen? A Prince!

(She sees the King and Queen.)

Oh, your Majesties! *(And bows very low.)*

QUEEN

Arise, Lady Little-Boy. We have made your boy our son and heir.

MOTHER

Does that mean—I must—he must go from—me?

KING

When his country calls he must go.

BOY

You mean I must leave my mother?

KING

Some day you must leave her.

BOY *(to his mother)*

But don't you need me now?

MOTHER

David, if you are meant to be a king, I want you to be a king.

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

QUEEN

We'll leave you here together. You can tell him what you know.

(She understands what all women understand.)

KING

Farewell, my Prince.

QUEEN

My little boy!

(They leave the mother and the boy together.)

MOTHER

David, isn't it wonderful!

BOY

Mother, did they mean I had to leave you?

MOTHER

You will be a king.

BOY

I can't leave you.

(He sits disconsolately on the step of the King's seat.)

MOTHER *(sitting beside him)*

You are going to grow up to be a great, fine man, my David-Boy, and you will be a king. Some day you would have to leave me anyway—to go out into the world and seek your fortune.

BOY

But not so soon.

MOTHER

I'll be near, and I'll see you every day. You will be a king, my boy!

PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

BOY

You'll be all alone.

MOTHER

Oh, no, my boy, never alone. For every hour of every day I'll think of you and dream of you.

BOY

Who'll help you work?

MOTHER

There'll be no work. It will all be play, for my boy is going to be a king.

BOY (*as he leans his head against her shoulder*)

Oh, Mother, I'm so tired!

MOTHER (*placing her arm about him*)

I know. Do you remember how I used to sing a little lullaby to you when you were tired?

BOY (*his eyes are heavy with sleep*)

Uh-huh.

(*The mother hums softly as she places her cheek against his head, but the crown interferes somewhat.*)

BOY

Sing it out. I like the words.

MOTHER (*singing*)

Sleep, Davie, sleep—

BOY

No, I like the old words—the ones when I was a little boy.

MOTHER

Sleep, baby, sleep—
Close your tired eyes;
Here's a kiss from father,
To make you wealthy;

SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

Here's a kiss from mother,
To make you healthy;
And God the Father blows a kiss
To make you wise.
Sleep, baby, sleep.
Close your tired eyes.

(The Boy snuggles against his mother and then reaches up and takes off the crown. She carefully places it beside her and continues her lullaby as the curtains close.)

YOU *(in the audience)*

Well, will he be a king or not?

PROLOGUE

His mother knows.

(The Prologue and the Device-Bearer bow and disappear.)

(The ladies may arrange their hair and the gentlemen may cough to their throats' content.)

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